UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/56
12 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 19 December 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that on 4 December 1997 Mr. Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of the Republic of Belarus, signed Decree No. 628 "On the Extension of the Moratorium on the Export of Anti-Personnel Landmines" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "General and complete disarmament".

(Signed) Alyaksandr SYCHOU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

98-00609 (E) 130198

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ANNEX

[Original: Russian]

Decree No. 628 of 4 December 1997 by the President of the Republic of Belarus on the extension of the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines

In order to promote international efforts to achieve the goal of eliminating anti-personnel mines, I hereby decide:

1. To extend until the end of 1999 the moratorium on the export of all types of anti-personnel landmines, declared in accordance with Decree No. 335 of 22 August 1995 by the President of the Republic of Belarus on the introduction in the Republic of Belarus of a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines.

2. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus shall take measures to ensure the implementation of the moratorium declared.

3. This Decree shall enter into force on the date of its signing.

(Signed) A. G. LUKASHENKA
President of the Republic of Belarus

UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/57
13 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Letter dated 19 December 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In October 1997, the Government of Norway, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Labour Organization, organized an international conference on child labour. The conference, which took place in Oslo, was attended by representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations from a large number of countries.

In view of the increasing worldwide awareness of and preoccupation with the problems related to child labour, I would kindly request that the Agenda for Action adopted at the conference be published as an official document of the United Nations.

The Agenda for Action is of direct relevance to the consideration of the item entitled "Promotion and protection of the rights of the child".

Your assistance in this regard will be highly appreciated.

(Signed) Jakken BIØRN LIAN
Permanent Representative

98-00719 (E) 150198

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OSLO CONFERENCE ON CHILD LABOUR

AGENDA FOR ACTION

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1. Context

1.1 The Oslo Conference on Child Labour reflected the growing international concern about child labour. The conference was based on broadly accepted international instruments, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138, 1973) and the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29, 1930), and on a framework consisting of the Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children (1990) and the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990). The conference was a close follow-up to the Amsterdam Child Labour Conference (1997).

1.2 The participants at the Oslo conference recognised the importance of the many international and regional meetings having a bearing on the issue of child labour. Particular reference was made to the following:

- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action from the World Conference on Human Rights (1993),
- Programme for Action from the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994),
- Declaration and Programme for Action from the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1995),
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995),
- Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (1996),
- Chair's Summary and Conclusions from the Amsterdam Child Labour Conference (1997),

- Declaration of the Ninth SAARC Summit in Malé (May 1997),
- Cartagena Declaration on the Elimination of Child Labour (May 1997),
- Recommendations of the OAU Summit in Harare (June 1997).

1.3 Investment in the physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of children is an ethical, social, and economic imperative for all societies. The Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes the legal framework for the promotion and protection of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all children in an integrated manner. This means that all children, without exception, must be ensured survival, personal and social development, and physical, psychological and moral integrity, and that special protection measures must be taken for those in especially difficult circumstances.

1.4 Child labour is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. Thus, strategies for poverty reduction and elimination need to address this problem. Use of child labour slows down economic growth and social development and it constitutes a severe violation of basic human rights. The interconnection between child labour and the social conditions of the child and his/her family should be at the centre of sustainable

social development policies. The 20/20 initiative, which invites interested developed and developing countries to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) and national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes including basic education and primary health care, can effectively contribute to the fight against child labour. There is evidence that investment in human capital from early childhood, e.g. education and health, provides a society with a greater potential for economic and social development.

1.5 Child workers, especially girls, are at high risk, because child labour jeopardises the child's health, safety and education and physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Girls are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of child labour and require special attention.

1.6 Effective action against child labour requires political commitment and the creation of a broad coalition that includes both government and all sectors of society and adequate resources. The obligation to develop and implement policies, legislation, strategies and measures for the elimination of child labour rests with governments. Good governance can maximise the potential for equitable and sustainable economic growth as a strategy to counter child labour. Preventive measures should be recognised as the most cost-effective means of eliminating child labour.

1.7 Education, particularly basic education, is one of the principal means of preventing and eliminating child labour. [1] Children outside the school system are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, particularly to economic exploitation such as child labour. Child workers or potential child workers and the flow of children into work can be stemmed by establishing a system of accessible, relevant, high-quality, universal, compulsory basic education that is free for all.

1.8 Cooperation at the international level may contribute to the setting of standards, to overall poverty reduction, to better assessment of the impact of measures against child labour on the children and their families and in the framework of regional and international cooperation, and to promoting commitments with the aim of eliminating child labour.

1.9 Developed countries will strive for the fulfilment of the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for overall ODA as soon as possible, and to a more effective use of existing resources in close cooperation with developing countries.

[1] The term basic education refers to the years of free compulsory education.

2. Goal and priorities

2.1 The **main goal** is the effective elimination of child labour.

2.2 The objective is to protect the child from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2.3 **Priority** should be given to the immediate removal of children from the most intolerable (extreme) forms of child labour and to the physical and psychological rehabilitation of children involved. In line with such measures, adequate alternatives have to be provided for these children and their families.

2.4 Countries should **progressively move towards** the elimination of all child labour for children of school age (age depending on legislation in each country), to include any activity that interferes with children's development and their education.

2.5 The participants at the Oslo Conference agreed on the urgency of addressing the issues of child labour as discussed at the conference, and in particular of giving priority to the actions at national and international levels listed below.

3. Action at national level

Policy and programme development

3.1 Ensure that social and **economic policies** aimed at combating poverty focus on the needs of families and the community in their productive and caring activities, especially by implementing measures to provide the families of child workers with sustainable employment and income opportunities.

3.2 Design or accelerate implementation of existing **National Plans of Action for the Child**, as defined in the final document from the World Summit for Children, including strategies which integrate at long, medium and short term, social, political and economic measures for the elimination of child labour, and ensure the necessary resource allocation for their sustainable implementation.

3.3 Improve national systems for **collection of gender disaggregated information,** starting with **birth, civil and death registration** and comprising the scale, distribution and characteristics of child labour and related socio-economic data, including work carried out by very young children and work within the informal sector, inter alia through national censuses and household surveys, and develop the collection of statistical documentation on the progress made in accordance with appropriate indicators.

3.4 Draw up and implement a **time-bound programme of action** to prevent and eliminate all forms of child labour, starting with the most intolerable (extreme) forms. This should include adequate measures for the reintegration of children removed from work.

3.5 View the child in its **social conte..t**, including his/her family and general situation, and ensure that the voices of civil society, including those of the children themselves, their families and the local community, are heard in an appropriate and meaningful way when policies are developed and actions against child labour are decided.

3.6 Establish cross-sectoral and integrated **institutional mechanisms** for the progressive elimination of child labour, such as a high-level body, comprising all relevant ministries, and special committees for coordinating the activities of the various actors combating child labour, and define their complementary roles. These mechanisms should also involve local authorities, workers' and employers' organisations, NGOs and other relevant organisations. They should be administered at governmental level and avoid duplication of the work being done by other bodies.

3.7 Establish **multisectoral rehabilitation programmes** for children withdrawn from work, with a view to reintegrating the children into the family, the community and the formal education system.

Social mobilisation and role of civil society

3.8 Promote **changes in social perception** and **increased social awareness,** especially at the local level, by informing, educating, and sensitising parents and children, teachers, communities and society in general, with regard to the rights of the child, especially the right to basic education and to protection from economic exploitation.

3.9 Identify all groups concerned with and affected by child labour and define the **different strategies** necessary for awareness-raising within each group, recognising the need for involving all parties and establishing systems for assessing the impact of the various strategies.

3.10 Promote the **empowerment of women,** starting with the girl child, and ensure their full and equal participation in all aspects of society, including decision-making and participation in education and economic development on all levels. Education and improvement of women and girl's economic situation will have a positive impact on the well-being of children in general, and contribute to the elimination of child labour.

3.11 Support the **tripartite cooperation** between government and workers' and employers' organisations in their efforts to reduce incentives for using child labour, and in the implementation of labour legislation in all areas of work, including agriculture, domestic work and small businesses.

3.12 Encourage **action by trade unions** against child labour, in particular by supporting such action as a core issue for their policies, programmes and regular activities, and recognise and support the role of the unions in combating child labour, among others by involving them in the drafting of national plans and policies and in their implementation at all levels, and by encouraging them to promote awareness-raising among their members and the public.

3.13 Raise the awareness of **employers' organisations, including the corporate sector,** and involve them in the fight against child labour. Measures aimed at eliminating the demand for child labour could include identification of where in the chain of production child labour occurs, and support the development of voluntary codes of conduct on child labour combined with financial and material investment in programmes and projects to assist children and their families.

3.14 Stimulate **private sector investment** in ways that may contribute to the elimination of child labour, especially where and when rapidly growing investment may provide opportunities for new technologies and for replacing child workers by adults.

3.15 Encourage and support the **replacement of child workers** by unemployed adults, preferably from the same extended family wherever possible, and support initiatives to improve economic conditions for poor households. Any economic incentives given to parents of children withdrawn from work should be part of larger income-generating programmes.

3.16 Support the **non-governmental sector** in its efforts to complement and stimulate government action against child labour and to identify and denounce child labour abuses, encourage its further involvement and innovation to include children's participation in child labour action, support its efforts to carry out specific research on child labour and improve information networks and to promote intervention programmes in sectors of risk.

3.17 Support and encourage journalists and other media professionals who may contribute to social mobilisation by providing information of the highest quality, reliability and ethical standards concerning all aspects of child labour.

Education

3.18 Every child has the right to education. All work which interferes with the child's education must be regarded as unacceptable.

3.19 Formulate and implement a **time-bound programme for universal compulsory** basic **education free for all** that will ensure the necessary quality and relevance, as a central component of the national plan of action. This programme should encompass comprehensive policies indicating the current percentage of GNP allotted to basic

education, a target percentage for future allocations, and plans for improvement of education in terms of scope, quality and relevance. Laws and regulations to ensure that all children have access to education are required.

3.20 Advance the goal of **equal access to education** by taking measures to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, race, religion, national origin, age or disability.

3.21 Create a **gender-sensitive educational system** in order to ensure equal education and training opportunities and full and equal participation of women in educational administration and policy- and decision-making.

3.22 Ensure access to and completion of **relevant high-quality compulsory** basic **education free for all** children, paying special attention to girls to ensure their full and equal access to and possibility of completing such education. Develop job training programmes within the general framework of public education, and make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children.

3.23 Create **vocational training opportunities and apprenticeship programmes** for both boys and girls above school age, which focus on education and training, to be monitored by the competent authorities as a deterrent to exploitative practices, and strengthen such programmes where they already exist.

3.24 **Integrate working children**, wherever possible, into the formal education system. Non-formal education, such as part-time schools and open schools, is a useful transitional measure for reaching working children and children without access to formal education, as are special programmes that give working children access to education.

Legislation

3.25 Adopt and implement **national legislation** and policies on child labour in conformity with international standards and harmonise child labour legislation and policies with legislation and policies governing basic education, including protection of children in the informal sector, taking into consideration gender-specific needs and the effects of ethnic, religious and other forms of discrimination on the incidence of child labour. National legislation should make provision for inspection.

3.26 Promote **awareness-raising** and **dissemination of information in an easily understandable form** on local, national and international legislation concerning child labour among adults and working and non-working children alike.

3.27 Strengthen and improve the judiciary and the legal enforcement processes by sensitising and training such personnel as prosecutors and judges, police and correction officers in child labour-related legislation.

3.28 Strengthen and improve the **labour inspection system**, for example by training labour inspectors and involving different governmental and non-governmental actors in the preparation of a cross-sectoral mechanism of labour inspection that also covers child labour in the informal sector, agriculture and domestic work. Promote community-based monitoring systems and establish such systems at the lowest possible administrative level.

3.29 Participate actively in the development and adoption of a **new ILO convention** on the most intolerable (extreme) forms of child labour.

4. Action at international level

4.1 Increase overall **poverty orientation in aid programmes** in promoting economic growth while focusing on the most disadvantaged population groups, facilitating their access to productive employment, education, primary health care and basic social services.

4.2 Encourage the **ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments**, e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention No.138 and other relevant conventions, and provide technical assistance to efforts aimed at fulfilling the requirements of these instruments.

4.3 **Provide assistance** to countries actively involved in the elimination of child labour, e.g. through bilateral and multilateral programmes, including the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), and examine the possibility of incorporating the obligation to combat child labour, as well as the obligation to ensure the rights of children, into their programme mandates wherever appropriate.

4.4 Consider examining **existing** bilateral and multilateral **development cooperation programmes** to assess their effects on child labour and, where appropriate, in cooperation with the developing countries concerned, adjusting the programmes, also taking into account this aspect, to ensure a better use of resources and a greater impact.

4.5 Collaborate in the drawing up and implementation of **national plans of action**, including capacity-building measures.

4.6 Contribute to establishing and implementing **quantitative and qualitative** gender disaggregated **indicators** for governments to use in monitoring their commitment to combat child labour, including changes in the situation of working children.

4.7 Support the development in developing countries of **national information collection, research capacity** and **monitoring systems** related to child labour, such as the ILO's Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), to provide these countries with a tool for determine the incidence and root causes of child labour and for planning action and measuring progress in programme intervention.

4.8 Encourage international organisations, bilateral assistance agencies and international financial institutions to support national research, policy development and monitoring, with regard to the rights of the child, including the elimination of child labour.

4.9 Support existing or contribute to the creation of new **regional systems for information** on and **analysis** of the content and progress of national plans, legislation and statistics.

4.10 Encourage promotion of a **cross-sectoral and integrated approach** to child labour in general, and to related **coordination, exchange of experience,** and **impact assessment**.

4.11 Encourage national and international debates among media professionals on the economic and social conditions of children, including child labour.

4.12 Support and participate in the work done by **multilateral organisations** and **international financial institutions** to eliminate child labour, especially the ILO, UNICEF, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Bank and the regional development banks, and promote better coordination between these organisations and institutions.

4.13 Encourage the development of voluntary codes of conduct on child labour and material and financial investment in programmes and projects to assist children and their families.

4.14 Support country-level coordination and monitoring, through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or other relevant, effective and adaptable coordination frameworks.

4.15 Support the following up of actions aimed at the elimination of child labour by initiating informal consultations between governments, UN funds and programmes and specialised agencies, the World Bank and other financial institutions, the workers' and employers' organisations, the private sector and NGOs.

UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/58
14 January 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fifty-third session

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 31 December 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 26 December 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union, regarding the situation in Nigeria (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the agenda item entitled "Human rights questions".

(Signed) Jean-Louis WOLZFELD
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg
to the United Nations

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the situation in Nigeria issued on 26 December 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union is following very closely, and with anxiety, developments in the situation in Nigeria after the arrest on 21 December of General Diya and 11 other persons accused of attempting to carry out a coup d'état.

The European Union appeals urgently to the Nigerian authorities to treat the 12 persons arrested in accordance with legal principles corresponding to international standards. The prisoners should be entitled to legal proceedings which give them every guarantee that they can defend themselves and establish the truth in respect of the accusations made against them. The European Union cannot accept a repetition of the events of 1995.

UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/59
23 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Letter dated 21 January 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour, on behalf of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and on my own behalf, to express our deep appreciation for your understanding and support for the Decolonization Programme. The debate on the Decolonization Unit during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly came to a successful completion as a result of your commitment to the Decolonization Programme. I wish also to thank all Member States that supported the Programme and the work of the Special Committee during the session.

In accordance with the decision of the General Assembly to establish a stand-alone Decolonization Unit in the Department of Political Affairs, and with a view to opening the new session of the Special Committee, I kindly request that appropriate action be taken to assign the Secretary of the Special Committee and his Assistant to the Decolonization Unit in the Department of Political Affairs, as agreed to in both the Fourth Committee and the Fifth Committee and later endorsed by the General Assembly.

I would like to invite you to open the 1998 session of the Special Committee, which will begin in the first week of February. I wish to convey to you the assurances of the Special Committee that it will continue to cooperate fully with you and with the Secretariat in order to implement the Decolonization Programme. I take this opportunity to assure also the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories that the Special Committee will continue to maintain their interests as a paramount goal in its work programme and to ensure that their right to self-determination is fully implemented. I would like to request that

this letter be issued as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

(Signed) Utula U. SAMANA, CMG
Chairman
Special Committee on the Situation
with regard to the Implementation
of the Declaration on the Granting
of Independence to Colonial
Countries and Peoples

UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/60
26 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session

SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Letter dated 26 January 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the joint statement by the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, and the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, made on 6 January 1998 in Ashgabat.

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Aksoltan ATAEVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of Turkmenistan
to the United Nations

(Signed) Akmaral Kh. ARYSTANBEKOVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
to the United Nations

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

Joint statement by the Heads of State of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, made on 6 January 1998 in Ashgabat

The Presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan held a bilateral meeting during which they had a frank and constructive dialogue on a wide range of issues relating to the foreign and domestic policies of the two States, as well as on the development and strengthening of mutually advantageous economic ties and cooperation between their States.

The sides informed each other of the current state of their national economies and the prospects for economic development, and expressed their common position that, with their enormous raw materials potential and as two of the world's leaders in natural resources, they were keenly interested in the effective use of natural resources on a priority basis for the benefit of the peoples of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

The sides expressed the need to consolidate their efforts to ensure the two States' more dynamic and broader access to the international oil and gas market.

The sides intend to cooperate and make active and targeted use of the two States' existing economic potential to develop jointly and expand exports of hydrocarbons and their by-products.

Stressing their common interest in cooperating in the delivery of their exports to world markets, the sides intend to step up their participation in the development and implementation of joint multilateral and international projects to build pipelines for the transit and export of oil and gas, including the laying of such pipelines across the Central Asian countries and the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean and Europe.

The sides have a common position and the same intentions with regard to the numerous opportunities for developing the two States' export potential. They believe that such an approach is fully in keeping with their strategic objectives, and will ensure that each country takes its proper place in the system of international economic relations and will strengthen their national economies.

UNITED NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/61
S/1998/69
27 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 20 January 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit the text of a Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed by Mr. William Clinton, President of the United States of America, Mr. Lennart Meri, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and Mr. Algirdas Brazauskas, President of the Republic of Lithuania, in Washington, D.C., on 16 January 1998 (see annex).

We should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Trivimi VELLISTE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations

(Signed) Janis PRIEDKALNS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations

(Signed) Oskaras JUSYS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations

(Signed) Bill RICHARDSON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations

Annex

[Original: English]

Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed on 16 January 1998 at Washington, D.C.

Preamble

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, hereinafter referred to as Partners,

Sharing a common vision of a peaceful and increasingly integrated Europe, free of divisions, dedicated to democracy, the rule of law, free markets, and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people;

Recognizing the historic opportunity to build a new Europe, in which each State is secure in its internationally recognized borders and respects the independence and territorial integrity of all members of the transatlantic community;

Determined to strengthen their bilateral relations as a contribution to building this new Europe, and to enhance the security of all States through the adaptation and enlargement of European and transatlantic institutions;

Committed to the full development of human potential within just and inclusive societies attentive to the promotion of harmonious and equitable relations among individuals belonging to diverse ethnic and religious groups;

Avowing a common interest in developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all other States in the region;

Recalling the friendly relations that have been continuously maintained between the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania since 1922;

Further recalling that the United States of America never recognized the forcible incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940, but rather regards their statehood as uninterrupted since the establishment of their independence, a policy which the United States has restated continuously for five decades;

Celebrating the rich contributions that immigrants from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States of America, as well as the European heritage enjoyed by the United States as a beneficiary of the contributions of intellectuals, artists, and Hanseatic traders from the Baltic States to the development of Europe; praising the contributions of United States citizens to the liberation and rebuilding of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

Affirm as a political commitment declared at the highest level, the following principles and procedures to guide their individual and joint efforts to achieve the goals of this Charter.

Principles of partnership

The United States of America has a real, profound, and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The United States of America warmly welcomes the success of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in regaining their freedom and resuming their rightful places in the community of nations.

The United States of America respects the sacrifices and hardships undertaken by the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to re-establish their independence. It encourages efforts by these States to continue to expand their political, economic, security and social ties with other nations as full members of the transatlantic community.

The Partners affirm their commitment to the rule of law as a foundation for a transatlantic community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all just societies to protect and respect the human rights and civil liberties of all individuals residing within their territories.

The Partners underscore their shared commitment to the principles and obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Partners reaffirm their shared commitment to the purposes, principles, and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including the Charter of Paris and the documents adopted at the Lisbon OSCE Summit.

The Partners will observe in good faith their commitments to promote and respect the standards for human rights embodied in the above-mentioned OSCE documents and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They will implement their legislation protecting such human rights fully and equitably.

The United States of America commends the measures taken by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to advance the integration of Europe by establishing close cooperative relations among themselves and with their neighbours, as well as their promotion of regional cooperation through their participation in forums such as the Baltic Assembly, Baltic Council of Ministers, and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Viewing good-neighbourly relations as fundamental to overall security and stability in the transatlantic community, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reaffirm their determination to enhance further bilateral relations between themselves and with other neighbouring States.

The Partners will intensify their efforts to promote the security, prosperity and stability of the region. The Partners will draw on the points noted below in focusing their efforts to deepen the integration of the Baltic States into transatlantic and European institutions, promote cooperation in security and defence, and develop the economies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A commitment to integration

As part of a common vision of a Europe whole and free, the Partners declare that their shared goal is the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defence institutions. Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are each secure.

The Partners reaffirm their commitment to the principle, established in the Helsinki Final Act, repeated in the Budapest and Lisbon OSCE summit declarations, and also contained in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, that the security of all States in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible.

The Partners further share a commitment to the core principle, also articulated in the OSCE Code of Conduct and reiterated in subsequent OSCE summit declarations, that each State has the inherent right to individual and collective self-defence as well as the right freely to choose its own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance.

The Partners support the vital role being played by a number of complementary institutions and bodies - including OSCE, the European Union, the West European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Council of Europe, and the Council of Baltic Sea States - in achieving the partners' shared goal of an integrated, secure, and undivided Europe.

They believe that, irrespective of factors related to history or geography, such institutions should be open to all European democracies willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities and obligations of membership, as determined by those institutions.

The Partners welcome a strong and vibrant OSCE dedicated to promoting democratic institutions, human rights and fundamental freedoms. They strongly support OSCE's role as a mechanism to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and crises.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each reaffirm their goal to become full members of all European and transatlantic institutions, including the European Union and NATO.

The United States of America recalls its long-standing support for the enlargement of the European Union, affirming it as a core institution in the new

Europe and declaring that a stronger, larger, and outward-looking European Union will further security and prosperity for all of Europe.

The Partners believe that the enlargement of NATO will enhance the security of the United States, Canada, and all the countries in Europe, including those States not immediately invited to membership or not currently interested in membership.

The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join NATO. It affirms its view that NATO's partners can become members as each aspirant proves itself able and willing to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance.

The United States of America reiterates its view that the enlargement of NATO is an ongoing process. It looks forward to future enlargements, and remains convinced that, not only will NATO's door remain open to new members, but that the first countries invited to membership will not be the last. No non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions. The United States notes that the Alliance is prepared to strengthen its consultations with aspirant countries on the full range of issues related to possible NATO membership.

The Partners welcome the results of the Madrid Summit. They support the Alliance's commitment to an open-door policy and welcome the Alliance's recognition of the Baltic States as aspiring members of NATO. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania pledge to deepen their close relations with the Alliance through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace, and the intensified dialogue process.

The Partners underscore their interest in Russia's democratic and stable development and support a strengthened NATO-Russia relationship as a core element of their shared vision of a new and peaceful Europe. They welcome the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter, both of which further improve European security.

Security cooperation

The Partners will consult together, as well as with other countries, in the event that a Partner perceives that its territorial integrity, independence, or security is threatened or at risk. The Partners will use bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for such consultations.

The United States welcomes and appreciates the contributions that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have already made to European security through the peaceful restoration of independence and their active participation in the Partnership for Peace. The United States also welcomes their contributions to the Implementation Force (IFOR), the Stabilization Force (SFOR), and other international peacekeeping missions.

Building on the existing cooperation among their respective ministries of defence and armed forces, the United States of America supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to provide for their legitimate defence needs, including development of appropriate and interoperable military forces.

The Partners welcome the establishment of the Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) as an effective body for international coordination of security assistance to Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's defence forces.

The Partners will cooperate further in the development and expansion of defence initiatives, such as the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BaltBat), the Baltic Squadron (Baltron), and the Baltic airspace management regime (BaltNet), which provide a tangible demonstration of practical cooperation enhancing the common security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the transatlantic community.

The Partners intend to continue mutually beneficial military cooperation and will maintain regular consultations, using the established Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Relations.

Economic cooperation

The Partners affirm their commitment to free market mechanisms as the best means to meet the material needs of their people.

The United States of America commends the substantial progress its Baltic Partners have made to implement economic reform and development and their transition to free market economies.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emphasize their intention to deepen their economic integration with Europe and the global economy, based on the principles of free movement of people, goods, capital and services.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania underscore their commitment to continue market-oriented economic reforms and to express their resolve to achieve full integration into global economic bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), while creating conditions for smoothly acceding to the European Union.

Noting this objective, the United States of America will work to facilitate the integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with the world economy and appropriate international economic organizations, in particular, WTO and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on appropriate commercial terms.

The Partners will work individually and together to develop legal and financial conditions in their countries conducive to international investment. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania welcome United States investment in their economies.

The Partners will continue to strive for mutually advantageous economic relations, building on the principles of equality and non-discrimination to create the conditions necessary for such cooperation.

The Partners will commence regular consultations to further cooperation and provide for regular assessment of progress in the areas of economic development, trade, investment, and related fields. These consultations will be chaired at the appropriately high level.

Recognizing that combating international organized crime requires a multilateral effort, the Partners agree to cooperate fully in the fight against this threat to the world economy and political stability. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain committed to developing sound legislation in this field and to enhancing the implementation of this legislation through the strengthening of a fair and well-functioning judicial system.

The United States-Baltic relationship

In all of these spheres of common endeavour, the Partners, building on their shared history of friendship and cooperation, solemnly reaffirm their commitment to a rich and dynamic United States-Baltic partnership for the twenty-first century.

The Partners view their partnership in the areas of political, economic, security, defence, cultural, and environmental affairs as contributing to close ties between their people and facilitating the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic structures.

In order to strengthen these ties further, the Partners will establish a Partnership Commission chaired at the appropriately high level to evaluate common efforts. This Commission will meet once a year, or as needed, to take stock of the Partnership, assess results of bilateral consultations on economic, military and other areas, and review progress achieved towards meeting the goals of this Charter.

In order better to reflect changes in the European and transatlantic political and security environment, signing Partners are committed regularly at the highest level to review this agreement.

For the United States of America:

For the Republic of Estonia:

For the Republic of Latvia:

For the Republic of Lithuania:

Washington, D.C. 16 January 1998

UNITED NATIONS **A S**

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/61*
S/1998/69*
5 February 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS
AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 20 January 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit the text of a Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed by Mr. William Clinton, President of the United States of America, Mr. Lennart Meri, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and Mr. Algirdas Brazauskas, President of the Republic of Lithuania, in Washington, D.C., on 16 January 1998 (see annex).

We should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Trivimi VELLISTE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations

(Signed) Janis PRIEDKALNS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations

(Signed) Oskaras JUSYS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations

(Signed) Bill RICHARDSON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the United States of America
to the United Nations

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex

[Original: English]

Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania, signed on 16 January 1998 at Washington, D.C.

Preamble

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, hereinafter referred to as Partners,

Sharing a common vision of a peaceful and increasingly integrated Europe, free of divisions, dedicated to democracy, the rule of law, free markets, and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people;

Recognizing the historic opportunity to build a new Europe, in which each State is secure in its internationally recognized borders and respects the independence and territorial integrity of all members of the transatlantic community;

Determined to strengthen their bilateral relations as a contribution to building this new Europe, and to enhance the security of all States through the adaptation and enlargement of European and transatlantic institutions;

Committed to the full development of human potential within just and inclusive societies attentive to the promotion of harmonious and equitable relations among individuals belonging to diverse ethnic and religious groups;

Avowing a common interest in developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all other States in the region;

Recalling the friendly relations that have been continuously maintained between the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania since 1922;

Further recalling that the United States of America never recognized the forcible incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940, but rather regards their statehood as uninterrupted since the establishment of their independence, a policy which the United States has restated continuously for five decades;

Celebrating the rich contributions that immigrants from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States of America, as well as the European heritage enjoyed by the United States as a beneficiary of the contributions of intellectuals, artists, and Hanseatic traders from the Baltic States to the development of Europe; praising the contributions of United States citizens to the liberation and rebuilding of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

Affirm as a political commitment declared at the highest level, the following principles and procedures to guide their individual and joint efforts to achieve the goals of this Charter.

Principles of partnership

The United States of America has a real, profound, and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The United States of America warmly welcomes the success of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in regaining their freedom and resuming their rightful places in the community of nations.

The United States of America respects the sacrifices and hardships undertaken by the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to re-establish their independence. It encourages efforts by these States to continue to expand their political, economic, security and social ties with other nations as full members of the transatlantic community.

The Partners affirm their commitment to the rule of law as a foundation for a transatlantic community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all just societies to protect and respect the human rights and civil liberties of all individuals residing within their territories.

The Partners underscore their shared commitment to the principles and obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Partners reaffirm their shared commitment to the purposes, principles, and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including the Charter of Paris and the documents adopted at the Lisbon OSCE Summit.

The Partners will observe in good faith their commitments to promote and respect the standards for human rights embodied in the above-mentioned OSCE documents and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They will implement their legislation protecting such human rights fully and equitably.

The United States of America commends the measures taken by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to advance the integration of Europe by establishing close cooperative relations among themselves and with their neighbours, as well as their promotion of regional cooperation through their participation in forums such as the Baltic Assembly, Baltic Council of Ministers, and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Viewing good-neighbourly relations as fundamental to overall security and stability in the transatlantic community, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reaffirm their determination to enhance further bilateral relations between themselves and with other neighbouring States.

The Partners will intensify their efforts to promote the security, prosperity and stability of the region. The Partners will draw on the points noted below in focusing their efforts to deepen the integration of the Baltic States into transatlantic and European institutions, promote cooperation in security and defence, and develop the economies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A commitment to integration

As part of a common vision of a Europe whole and free, the Partners declare that their shared goal is the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defence institutions. Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are each secure.

The Partners reaffirm their commitment to the principle, established in the Helsinki Final Act, repeated in the Budapest and Lisbon OSCE summit declarations, and also contained in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, that the security of all States in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible.

The Partners further share a commitment to the core principle, also articulated in the OSCE Code of Conduct and reiterated in subsequent OSCE summit declarations, that each State has the inherent right to individual and collective self-defence as well as the right freely to choose its own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance.

The Partners support the vital role being played by a number of complementary institutions and bodies - including OSCE, the European Union, the West European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Council of Europe, and the Council of Baltic Sea States - in achieving the partners' shared goal of an integrated, secure, and undivided Europe.

They believe that, irrespective of factors related to history or geography, such institutions should be open to all European democracies willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities and obligations of membership, as determined by those institutions.

The Partners welcome a strong and vibrant OSCE dedicated to promoting democratic institutions, human rights and fundamental freedoms. They strongly support OSCE's role as a mechanism to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and crises.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each reaffirm their goal to become full members of all European and transatlantic institutions, including the European Union and NATO.

The United States of America recalls its long-standing support for the enlargement of the European Union, affirming it as a core institution in the new

Europe and declaring that a stronger, larger, and outward-looking European Union will further security and prosperity for all of Europe.

The Partners believe that the enlargement of NATO will enhance the security of the United States, Canada, and all the countries in Europe, including those States not immediately invited to membership or not currently interested in membership.

The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join NATO. It affirms its view that NATO's partners can become members as each aspirant proves itself able and willing to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance.

The United States of America reiterates its view that the enlargement of NATO is an ongoing process. It looks forward to future enlargements, and remains convinced that, not only will NATO's door remain open to new members, but that the first countries invited to membership will not be the last. No non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions. The United States notes that the Alliance is prepared to strengthen its consultations with aspirant countries on the full range of issues related to possible NATO membership.

The Partners welcome the results of the Madrid Summit. They support the Alliance's commitment to an open-door policy and welcome the Alliance's recognition of the Baltic States as aspiring members of NATO. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania pledge to deepen their close relations with the Alliance through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace, and the intensified dialogue process.

The Partners underscore their interest in Russia's democratic and stable development and support a strengthened NATO-Russia relationship as a core element of their shared vision of a new and peaceful Europe. They welcome the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter, both of which further improve European security.

Security cooperation

The Partners will consult together, as well as with other countries, in the event that a Partner perceives that its territorial integrity, independence, or security is threatened or at risk. The Partners will use bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for such consultations.

The United States welcomes and appreciates the contributions that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have already made to European security through the peaceful restoration of independence and their active participation in the Partnership for Peace. The United States also welcomes their contributions to the Implementation Force (IFOR), the Stabilization Force (SFOR), and other international peacekeeping missions.

Building on the existing cooperation among their respective ministries of defence and armed forces, the United States of America supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to provide for their legitimate defence needs, including development of appropriate and interoperable military forces.

The Partners welcome the establishment of the Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) as an effective body for international coordination of security assistance to Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's defence forces.

The Partners will cooperate further in the development and expansion of defence initiatives, such as the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BaltBat), the Baltic Squadron (Baltron), and the Baltic airspace management regime (BaltNet), which provide a tangible demonstration of practical cooperation enhancing the common security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the transatlantic community.

The Partners intend to continue mutually beneficial military cooperation and will maintain regular consultations, using the established Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Relations.

Economic cooperation

The Partners affirm their commitment to free market mechanisms as the best means to meet the material needs of their people.

The United States of America commends the substantial progress its Baltic Partners have made to implement economic reform and development and their transition to free market economies.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emphasize their intention to deepen their economic integration with Europe and the global economy, based on the principles of free movement of people, goods, capital and services.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania underscore their commitment to continue market-oriented economic reforms and to express their resolve to achieve full integration into global economic bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), while creating conditions for smoothly acceding to the European Union.

Noting this objective, the United States of America will work to facilitate the integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with the world economy and appropriate international economic organizations, in particular, WTO and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on appropriate commercial terms.

The Partners will work individually and together to develop legal and financial conditions in their countries conducive to international investment. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania welcome United States investment in their economies.

The Partners will continue to strive for mutually advantageous economic relations, building on the principles of equality and non-discrimination to create the conditions necessary for such cooperation.

The Partners will commence regular consultations to further cooperation and provide for regular assessment of progress in the areas of economic development, trade, investment, and related fields. These consultations will be chaired at the appropriately high level.

Recognizing that combating international organized crime requires a multilateral effort, the Partners agree to cooperate fully in the fight against this threat to the world economy and political stability. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain committed to developing sound legislation in this field and to enhancing the implementation of this legislation through the strengthening of a fair and well-functioning judicial system.

The United States-Baltic relationship

In all of these spheres of common endeavour, the Partners, building on their shared history of friendship and cooperation, solemnly reaffirm their commitment to a rich and dynamic United States-Baltic partnership for the twenty-first century.

The Partners view their partnership in the areas of political, economic, security, defence, cultural, and environmental affairs as contributing to close ties between their people and facilitating the full integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into European and transatlantic structures.

In order to strengthen these ties further, the Partners will establish a Partnership Commission chaired at the appropriately high level to evaluate common efforts. This Commission will meet once a year, or as needed, to take stock of the Partnership, assess results of bilateral consultations on economic, military and other areas, and review progress achieved towards meeting the goals of this Charter.

In order better to reflect changes in the European and transatlantic political and security environment, signing Partners are committed regularly at the highest level to review this agreement.

For the United States of America:

For the Republic of Estonia:

For the Republic of Latvia:

For the Republic of Lithuania:

Washington, D.C. 16 January 1998

UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/62
30 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session

SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Letter dated 26 January 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a joint statement by the heads of State of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, made on 5 January 1998 in Ashgabat (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the items entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", "The maintenance of international security - prevention of the violent disintegration of States", "Macroeconomic

policy questions" and "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation".

(Signed) Akmaral ARYSTANBEKOVA
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Kazakhstan to the United Nations

(Signed) Zamira ESHMAMBETOVA
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations

(Signed) Rashid ALIMOV
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Tajikistan to the United Nations

(Signed) Aksoltan ATAEVA
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Turkmenistan to the United Nations

(Signed) Alisher VOHIDOV
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Uzbekistan to the United Nations

ANNEX

Joint statement by the heads of State of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, made on 5 January 1998 in Ashgabat

On 5 January 1998, the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan held a meeting in Ashgabat.

Presidents Nursultan Nazarbaev, Askar Akayev, Emomali Rakhmonov and Islam Karimov extended their good wishes to President Saparmurat Niyazov in connection with his recovery from an illness, expressed their support and wished him success in his work for the good of the people of Turkmenistan.

During the meeting, which took place in a spirit of mutual understanding, friendship and good-neighbourliness, the Presidents exchanged views on the current state of, and prospects for developing, relations among the countries of the region, broadening and deepening cooperation in the most important areas of economic and social and cultural life, and on a wide range of issues relating to international and regional policies of mutual interest.

In particular, the leaders of the five States noted their States' enormous historical potential and common historical roots, the interrelatedness of their destinies, their traditions of friendship, the similarity of their cultures, customs and mores, and the stability of their good-neighbourly relations. On the eve of the twenty-first century and the third millennium, the leaders of the five States were unanimous in their view that the most pressing need was to protect the region from political crises and conflicts, and to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence and constructive partnership on an equal footing for the good of one and all.

With respect to the outcome of the meeting, the sides,

Considering the need to consolidate the independence of their States, improve the well-being of their peoples, develop their national economies and make the most effective use of their geopolitical situation and natural-resources potential;

Bearing in mind the similarity of their goals and objectives with respect to the independent development of their countries, consolidation of their statehood, and their international recognition as full subjects of international law;

Reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, desiring to deepen the ties among their countries and peoples on the basis of the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, equality, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, rejection of the use of force or threat of force and rejection of economic or any other means of exerting pressure, conscientious fulfilment of their obligations, and compliance with the universally recognized norms of international law,

Stated the following:

1. The sides are unanimous in their determination to consolidate their political and economic independence through the extensive development of international bilateral and multilateral ties, regional cooperation and mutual support in diverse international organizations and forums.

2. The sides reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to deepening friendly, equitable and mutually advantageous relations based on a long-term partnership and consistent with the national interests of all five States, and to security and stability in the region.

3. The sides agreed that the Commonwealth of Independent States is an acceptable model for bilateral and multilateral cooperation among States in transition. At the same time, it was necessary to bear in mind that the form of participation in the Commonwealth must be determined by each State independently in the light of its development priorities and its international obligations.

4. The sides confirmed the need to implement the Ashgabat Declaration of the Economic Cooperation Organization with respect to the creation of a pipeline infrastructure and transport and communications systems in the region.

They noted the importance of the Treaty between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on the creation of a single economic area within the framework of regional integration.

5. The sides emphasized the need to increase the exploitation and output of their countries' rich natural resources, particularly natural gas and oil, and take urgent measures to implement joint projects to lay pipelines and construct electric power lines to transport sources of energy to world markets.

6. The sides expressed their satisfaction with the process of settling the situation in Tajikistan and noted that the normalization of the situation in that country was important for the entire region. They expressed their readiness to contribute in every way possible to the achievement of reconciliation and accord in Tajikistan through the creation of democratic and secular State based on the rule of law.

7. The sides were unanimous in their view that the establishment of peace and accord in Afghanistan was possible only through negotiations between the opposing groups with the active assistance of all interested parties. They reaffirmed their readiness to continue their joint efforts to settle the situation in Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of neighbouring countries, the Russian Federation and the United States of America and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The sides unanimously noted the usefulness and timeliness of the Ashgabat meeting, which helped strengthen mutual understanding and confidence, and clarify positions on key issues concerning relations among the five fraternal countries.

President Saparmurat Niyazov expressed his thanks to the leaders of the four fraternal neighbouring States for their attention, good wishes and friendly support.

Presidents Nazarbaev, Akayev, Rakhmonov and Karimov thanked President Niyazov for his hospitality and warm welcome.